

**Virginia Latino Advisory Board**  
**Friday, September 11, 2020**  
**Virtual Meeting via Webex**

In attendance: Paul Berry (Chair), Karina Kline-Gabel (Vice Chair), C. Alexander Guzmán (Secretary), Cecilia Barbosa, Aida Pacheco, Gloria Maria Peña Rockhold, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, Cecilia Williams, Sergio Rimola, Juan Espinoza, Carmen Romero, Damien Cabezas, Melody Gonzales, Manuel Leiva, Diana Brown, Rodrigo Velasquez, Walewska Watkins, Joshua DeSilva; Lyons Sanchezconcha

Not in attendance: Edgar Aranda, Manuel Leiva

Staff & Counsel: Justin Bell, Maribel Castañeda, Traci DeShazor, Kelly Thomasson

**Call to Order 9:30 AM**

Paul Berry called the meeting to order

He began by acknowledging the work of the committee chairs and welcomed new members to the Board. He thanked those members whose service on the board had come to a close.

He continued by describing the meeting that he, the VLAB Executive Committee, and the committee chairs had with Governor Northam the day before, September 10<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting they discussed the preliminary findings of the Annual Report process and what process steps need to be realized to move those recommendations forward.

Chair Berry finished by highlighting the agenda for the day and encouraging the board to consider the items they would like to prioritize today.

**Approval of Minutes:** Carmen Romero motioned to adopt the May minutes. Karina Kline Gabel seconded. All members present were in favor, none against, and no abstentions. *Roll call vote below.*

**Ayes:** Paul Berry, Karina Kline-Gabel, Alexander Guzmán, Aida Pacheco, Carmen Romero, Cecilia Barbosa, Cecilia Williams, Diana Brown, Damien Cabezas, Eduardo Zelaya, Diana Patterson, Gloria Peña Rockhold, Lyons Sanchezconcha, Juan Espinoza, Manuel Leiva, Melody Gonzales, Sergio Rimola, Joshua DeSilva, Walewska M. Watkins, Rodrigo Velasquez

**Nays:** None

**Abstentions:** None

Motion passes

**Approval of Meeting Agenda:** Chair Berry called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Rodrigo Velasquez made the motion to approve the meeting agenda. Cecilia Williams seconded. *Roll call vote below.*

**Ayes:** Paul Berry, Karina Kline-Gabel, Alexander Guzmán, Aida Pacheco, Carmen Romero, Cecilia Barbosa, Cecilia Williams, Diana Brown, Damien Cabezas, , Eduardo Zelaya, Diana Patterson, Gloria Peña Rockhold, Lyons Sanchezconcha, Juan Espinoza, Manuel E. Leiva, Melody Gonzales, Sergio Rimola, Joshua DeSilva, Walewska M. Watkins, Rodrigo Velasquez

**Nays:** None

**Abstentions:** None

Motion passes

**Public Comment – 9:52 AM**

Chair Berry asked if members of the public wanted to offer commentary. No comments were made.

**Chair's report (Paul Berry) 9:53 AM**

Chair Berry reviewed the process that he and the committee chairs took when crafting the Annual Report. Committee chairs were asked for input into the draft in two forms: recommendations addressing a particular topic, and research or information that demonstrated the problem, who can take action on it, and what that action is. This was then edited collectively to reflect the intent behind recommendations while describing what action could be taken to implement them.

Chair Berry continued by speaking generally on the process that the administration takes following VLAB's Annual Report submission. Once submitted, the Governor and his Cabinet review it with the Governor's policy team. Over the next few months VLAB will be discussing with those same stakeholders what recommendations can do to improve the lives of Latinos in Virginia.

**Administrative Report (Traci DeShazor) 9:55 AM**

Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth DeShazor thanked VLAB for engagement and support of the Administration during this unusual time that includes an unexpected special session for the General Assembly. She highlighted the vacancy for the Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration to replace Ms. Danielle Campbell, who was asked to join a new opportunity working for Senator Jennifer McClellan.

Deputy DeShazor then covered several operational topics. A new email has been established for board matters ([VLAB@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:VLAB@governor.virginia.gov)), and website updates are underway to facilitate increased document posting. That process will also incorporate the growing use of social media to increase VLAB's public visibility.

Next, she described the increase of Latinos serving on boards and commissions, including the new members joining VLAB today that replace many long serving members who have reached the limit of their appointment terms. In the interim before a new Special Assistant is hired the Deputy Secretary said she would be updating committee rosters, verify VLAB contact information for all members, and take lead in organizing necessary steps prior to meetings.

**Latino Outreach Update (Maribel Castañeda) 10:05 AM**

Ms. Maribel Castañeda, Director of Board Appointments and Director of Latino Outreach, gave her update to the board. Her remarks are summarized below.

- Email updates to the Latino outreach list are sent weekly that include administration updates, events, and resources accessible in English and Spanish. Events include those publicized on city and county government websites.

- She continues to post updates and new information on the VLAB Facebook page
- Hispanic Heritage Month will begin on September 15<sup>th</sup>.
- These events took place recently or are planned:
  - July 23<sup>rd</sup> Chair Berry organized a meeting with Northern Virginia leaders and Fairfax Board of Supervisor and Chairman Jeffrey McKay – it was an opportunity to discuss on a locality level the efforts that are supporting the Latino community through Covid-19
  - July 27<sup>th</sup> – she joined the other Outreach Directors to volunteer at the Diversity Richmond food drive in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month.
  - August 23<sup>rd</sup> – a webinar on the COVIDWISE Exposure Notifications app for the Hispanic/Latino/Latinx community
  - August 24<sup>th</sup> – a panel discussion in partnership with VDOE, PTA of Virginia, and VLAB. It was a virtual town hall discussion about the community of support and services available to help Virginia's Latinx community prepare for the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and upcoming school year.
  - August 28<sup>th</sup> – the Governor's Office organized a Hispanic/Latino/x Leaders COVID-19 Update
  - An upcoming event on the 2020 Census: We'll be joined by Armando Cruz-Martinez, Mid-Atlantic Regional Census Campaign Manager.
  - An upcoming event on September 22 with NextGen Virginia to discuss why the Latinx vote is so important. VLAB was invited to join as a guest speaker.
- Her focus over the next month will be Hispanic Heritage Month
  - A press release and proclamation will be released on September 15<sup>th</sup>. The proclamation will be in English and Spanish
  - We're also having the First Lady of Virginia and Secretary of Education do book readings specific from Latino authors.
  - Just yesterday, she received the green light to organize a panel to highlight our Hispanic/Latino/x state employees. We'll be identifying 4-5 employees who will discuss their backgrounds and their experience working in state government. We'll be sure to share this event with you and record it so we can share with our Latino students.
  - We'll also have a panel on Latinos in Board Service Panel hosted by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The idea is Identify 4 panel speakers of Latino descent who are currently serving on boards and commissions. More information to come but we would love VLAB's partnership and support on this event.
  - Lastly, we're also putting together a Governor Northam's Latinx Virtual Forum Series. As a follow-up to the Latinx Summit last year, we want to do something for late October to early November. We're establishing a small organizing committee to think through five pre-recorded forums for the community.

### **Administration Update from Secretary of the Commonwealth Thomasson**

Secretary Thomasson gave an update that included information on new board appointments and a request to the board to promote the Census which will end on October 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Discussion on Annual Report Submission from Chair Paul Berry**

Chair Berry discussed the process for developing the Annual Report and noted deadline for submitting the report. A preliminary report has been submitted to Secretary Thomasson's office for review while the board continues to make final edits. He then asked for open discussion.

Carmen Romero thanked Paul for his work on the report and for making it an easy process for the chairs. Cecilia Barbosa also offered her thanks to Paul and the committee chairs for their work on the report. She asked if the Board would vote on the final report, which Chair Berry affirmatively confirmed.

### **Administration Update on COVID-19 - Pam Kestner, Department of Housing and Community Development**

The main discussion points are as follows:

- Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program has been put into place and is aimed at engaging renters, homeowners, and landlords
- The Governor's Priorities include
  - Reducing Evictions Across the Commonwealth (Executive Order 25)
  - \$50 mil to keep individuals and families housing during the pandemic
  - Proposed \$3.3 million for a Prevention and Eviction Diversion Pilot Program
- RMRP – Rent and Mortgage Relief Program
  - Support and ensure housing stability across the Commonwealth
  - Financial assistance provided to pay rent and mortgage costs on behalf of households experiencing housing instability due to the pandemic
  - DHCD is currently authorized to spend \$50 million to support the RMRP activities beginning April 1 until December 30, 2020
  - Basic eligibility requirements include
    - Valid lease or mortgage statement
    - Loss of income due to the Coronavirus pandemic
    - Have a rent or mortgage amount at or below 150% FMR
    - Gross household income at or below 80% AMI based on current month's income
  - What it does
    - Pays 100% of the current months mortgage or rent (plus associated fees) and 100% of past due mortgage or rent from April 1 to present
    - Between June 29 and August 26, 2020
      - 4360 households have applied
      - 2,400 household rent payments (\$4 million)
    - Third party can work with households who may be fearful of requesting government assistance

### **Northam Administration: The Year Ahead – Deputy Secretary Traci DeShazor**

Deputy DeShazor posed the following questions in her discussion:

- 14 months remaining in the Northam administration
- What is the focus for this final 14 months?
- Questions for consideration
  - What will your legacy be?
  - How will you engage the community?

## **Department of Transportation update by Rob Cary, Chief Deputy Commissioner**

Mr. Cary highlighted his meeting with Chief Underwood to discuss workforce diversity, the scholar program in which students work for VDoT during summers and school holidays, and the wounded veteran internships

## **Policy Update from Policy Director Courtney Dozier**

Director Dozier commented on: the Governor's focus on the budget, the budget reforecast scheduled for November, and aligning priorities with available resources. The Governor has asked the General Assembly to look at criminal justice and police reform; voting and elections; and housing issues.

**Committee Reports and Discussion** – each committee chair discussed their section of the report and other relevant business before the committee

### **Business** (Manuel Leiva)

- HB1150 removes the requirement that jail officials report immigration status to ICE
- Wage theft legislation has improved the mechanisms available for those who sue their employers to ask for attorney fees
- Instituting paid sick leave will continue to be a goal

### **Civic Engagement** (Karina Kline-Gabel)

- Diversification of the Criminal Justice Services Board is a new recommendation this year
- The Civic Engagement Committee started a leadership award a few years ago, and the submission form for nominations will be on the VLAB website on Monday. This year the committee is focusing on individuals on the frontline supporting our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic

### **Education and Workforce** (Melody Gonzales)

- An evolving situation with the pandemic and community needs has generated additional workforce recommendations. Aida Pacheco added that it is time to push for a more diverse workforce in state government.

### **Health** (Cecilia Barbosa)

- Presented updated data on COVID and shared several charts.
- A Health committee meeting will take place in the next few weeks
- Secretary Carey requested information on Latino community health and the committee provided this data

### **Housing** (Carmen Romero)

- Discussed recommendation details pertaining to the Rent and Mortgage Relief Program, including expanding landlord tenant law and replenishing the Virginia Housing Trust Fund

## **Administration Update from Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Dr. Dan Carey**

- Secretary Carey updated the board with to date COVIDWISE App adoption, which has exceeded 500,000 users.
- He commented generally on his focus on building trust in communities and making testing events accessible and open to all
- He is closely following the progress of coronavirus vaccine trials. Once a vaccine is available, he is putting in place a plan and structures to ensure access to the vaccine among the Latino communities
- He commented on vulnerabilities in the undocumented population and ways that DHHR will take this into account

**New Business:** Aida Pacheco motions to partner with the Administration to create a more purposeful, inclusive, and coordinated approach to planning for Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month. Joshua DeSilva Seconds. She continues by describing her motion as one that will emphasize civic engagement as a messaging strategy for future Hispanic Heritage Months.

**Ayes:** *Paul Berry, Karina Kline-Gabel, C. Alexander Guzmán, Cecilia Barbosa, Aida Pacheco, Gloria Maria Peña Rockhold, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, Cecilia Williams, Sergio Rimola, Juan Espinoza, Carmen Romero, Melody Gonzales, Walewska Watkins, Joshua DeSilva*

**Nays:** None

**Abstentions:** None

Motion passes

**Motion to adjourn** – Chair Berry calls for a motion to adjourn the meeting

Aida Pacheco motions to adjourn the meeting. Rodrigo Velasquez seconds.

**Ayes:** *Paul Berry, Karina Kline-Gabel, C. Alexander Guzmán, Cecilia Barbosa, Aida Pacheco, Gloria Maria Peña Rockhold, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, Cecilia Williams, Sergio Rimola, Juan Espinoza, Carmen Romero, Melody Gonzales, Walewska Watkins, Joshua DeSilva*

**Nays:** *None*

**Abstentions:** *None*

Motion passes

**Meeting Adjourned** 1:41 PM